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ABSTRACT

A number of factors act to unify the profession of psychology, while others press toward its dissolution. Factors which unify the psychology profession include intellectual exchange resulting in the transfer of knowledge, and the limited number of co-sponsored sessions during the national professional association meetings. Those which push psychology toward dissolution include the wide variety of circumstances and settings of practice, highly differentiated training programs, changes in perception of what psychology is, and a seeking of identity from insurance companies in order to gain access to third-party payments. (Author/HLM)

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Can Industrial Organizational Psychology Survive the Advancement of Professional Psychology?

Devolutional Circumstances

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Psychology is in a period of great turbulence. However, the fissure between academicians and practitioners, which has received so much attention, may prove insignificant relative to the the disagreements among the different areas of practice. Clinical psychology has consolidated the considerable gains it has made during the past 25 years. Unfortunately, the nature of this consolidation has had an adverse impact on school, industrial and even research psychologists (DiBella, 1978; MacKinney, 1978).

Devolution

At present there are calls for a restructuring of APA into a federation. In a similar vein, there is renewed interest in specialty licensing. This suggests a devolution of psychology.

Devolving need not be a bad experience. Despite the connotation of backsliding, decay, and becoming less than what one is today, "devolution" simply means the reverse of evolution, moving away from integration (though not necessarily to disintegration), moving away from unification, complexity, and coordination toward the unique, simple and independent. Whether devolution means that "the whole thing is falling apart" or just gaining adaptive flexibility is largely a matter of viewpoint.

There are costs and benefits associated with devolution. At more highly integrated states there is the benefit of large numbers representing diverse interests moving with coordinated effort; there are economies of scale; there is power vis a vis the external environment. However, as systems theory tells us, there will also be a considerable expense of effort to retain the structure and overcome entropy. A devolved state would save much of the effort required to maintain the organization and might better accommodate particular interests.

In considering the possible devolution of professional psychology two questions should be considered. First, one must ask what is gained through the integration of different types of psychological practice. Second, it is necessary to look at the circumstances of practice to see if these contribute to devolution.

Intellectual Exchange

One justification for maintaining unity among the various practices of psychology is the belief that each can gain from interaction with the others (Krasner, 1978). This assumes ongoing contact resulting in a transfer of knowledge. There are many instances in which this cross fertilization has occurred (i.e., application of psychodynamic principles to the study of organizations or the use of learning theory in behavior modification).

But is this cross fertilization of such significance that it would justify the present, integrated concept of psychology? Is it likely that we would cease to learn from each other, or learn materially less, if the different areas of practice went their own ways? To what degree have disciplines completely outside psychology provided significant insights for us?

The interaction among psychologists seems to be limited. This may be seen from the analysis of cosponsored sessions during last year's convention. This analysis, reported in Table 1, shows the major cosponsors with six selected divisions.[1] Neither division 14 nor 23 had many joint sessions. The three divisions which did make extensive use of joint sessions seem to be involved with incestuous cross fertilization, being the primary cosponsors for each other. Of the six divisions shown, only Division 16, School Psychology, appears to have had extensive interaction with diverse groups.

Cosponsorship of sessions may not be the best index of intellectual exchange. It is subject to political influence, reflects decisions made by relatively few people, and says nothing of the people who attended the sessions. Taking a different approach the 1977 APA Membership Directory was used to analyze multiple division membership.[2] Unfortunately 45.4% of the listings showed no divisional affiliation, and another 31.1% were affiliated with a single division. Of those members listing multiple division membership 24.3% were members of four or more divisions. One person was a member of twelve divisions. While the pattern of joint membership was quite eclectic, it involved less than a quarter of those sampled.

Another reason to doubt the adequacy of interarea exchange is the move to join new associations. Some of these further insularity (i.e., theme, topic or problem oriented groups). In other cases, it seems to be an attempt to find non-psychologists who can offer new insights (i.e., American Institute for Decision Sciences).

If the reason for union is mutual learning there is reason to doubt whether the present arrangement is working. Consistent with Koch's analysis of psychology's history, there is evidence of fragmentation and insularity, as well as strong affiliations between various areas and different external disciplines (Wertheimer, Barclay, et al, 1978, pp. 637-639).

Circumstances of Practice

At a basic level, psychologists may be viewed as doing similar things. There is a consistent focus on the individual --even when psychologists study social, cultural, or surgical interventions, they usually look at the impact upon individuals. There is a general faith in empiricism, most often expressed by a focus on behavior or discernible outcomes.

Yet, even if there is a common philosophy of method, there are vast differences in the specialized knowledge required to implement the approach in different professional settings. For example, the interview is a common tool, yet ones approach and techniques will be quite different in action, information gathering and theraputic interviews (Greller & Cech, 1976).

The professional is also required to have special knowledge of how to work best in the circumstances in which he or she functions. This is a situational savvy which is expected. Industrial, clinical, and school psychologists are all presumed to be familiar with testing, yet the particular tests about which they need to know are different. The working relationships which the professional psychologist must

manage vary as a function of the setting. There are differences of authority, expectation, and institutional culture for clinicians working with patients in a hospital, school psychologists working with children in a public school, and industrial psychologists working with managers in a large corporation. Effectiveness in these different contexts will be dependent upon the practitioner's ability to accommodate to the situation.

If ability to work effectively in a particular professional context is so important, it ought to be part of the aspiring practitioner's education. Inclusion of practicuum and internship experiences in the recently proposed accreditation standards is one way in which this need is recognized. However, the nature of practical training is apt to be quite different depending upon the area of practice. Thus far, many of the attempts to meet these training needs have added to the fragmentation. There are psychology programs in schools of business, divinity, and education. Such programs can focus on the contexts in which their students are expected to work. They avoid the battles found in large psychology departments where requirements which are crucial in one area are viewed as extaneous in others. While the specialized programs do meet the training needs within the area, they also foster devolution. They add one more boundary between people who are called psychologists.

Have We Already Devolved?

Discussions of federation or withdrawal from APA may be moot points. We may already be out! This conclusion might well be drawn from comments in recent APA publications in which industrial psychology is disregarded or treated as something alien.

Part of the problem is that Psychology seems to be seeking its identity from the insurance companies. Access to third party payments is exerting considerable pressure on the field. For example, DeLeon (1977) claims that recognition under national health insurance is an absolute necessity for the profession's continued existence and goes on to say that the National Register provides "an objective means of determining who is a psychologist." (pg. 751) Carlson (1978, pp. 493-494) furthers this cooptation by earmarking licensure as a tool for determining eligibility for insurance reimbursement. With only 18% of psychologists practicing therapy full time it seems our identity is being sold for a bowl of potage which most of us will never taste (Galvin, 1977).

There is a changed perception of what psychology is. We seem to have gone from a "science of mental life" to a "mental health service" in many people's minds. We find letters which complain that state licensing examinations are not sufficiently oriented to clinical psychology. Greenberg (1978) assures us that there is no need to assess consulting or I/O skills, clinical skills being the only ones warranting serious examination. Baskin (1978) apparently never thought intergroup conflict resolution would be a task for a psychologist and was perplexed and indignant at being asked about such things on a licensing examination; in fact, he thought such questions must have come from some other discipline. Even more disturbing is the way the preamble to the proposed accreditation criteria reads (APA Monitor, 1978). It is, of course, a particular indignity to be relegated to

the category of "other emerging areas." But, the primacy attributed to clinical psychology is equally interesting.

It seems that mental healthcare providers with their particular guild interests have taken over. All of professional psychology has been captured during their advance, and our captors have trouble even remembering that the rest of us are here. Certainly, escape through federation or withdrawal represents an option.

Yet, I would like to think that there is another option. Psychology seems to be so rich in potential; there is so much more to be done than care for mental ills (Wertheimer, et al, 1978). Perhaps our colleagues in their headlong rush to advance clinical practice have forgotten this potential. If only their consciousnesses could be raised to make them aware of the alternate avenues for advancement.

If we are to remain a part of professional psychology something must be done soon. Simple momentum is not drawing us closer to mutually satisfactory reconciliation. The circumstances described by other speakers suggest increasing impediments to the practice of I/O psychology. Unless there is some change these impediments can only be increased and devolution furthered by the pure practitioner model which is coming into vogue.

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Footnotes

1. The first 155 pages of the 1977 APA Convention Program were examined. Each instance of a cosponsored session was tallied. In the case of cosponsorship by more than two division each of the contacts were coded. Thus, a session sponsored by divisions 12, 13, 29, and 32 would be coded as six interdivisional contacts (e.g., 12 with 13, 29 and 32, 13 with 29 and 32, and 29 with 32).

2. Two pages were selected at random from the directory. The same coding procedure described in footnote 1 was used with divisional affiliation. No distinction was made between associate, member, and fellow status.

Table 1

Major cosponsors of sessions for six divisions

#12 Clinical (n= 73)		#17 Counseling (n= 74)		#29 Therapy (n= 74)	
16.3%	Counseling	20.3%	Therapy	23.0%	Clinical
6.8	Therapy	16.2	Clinical	20.3	Counseling
6.8	Women	13.5	Women	13.5	Humanistic
5.5	Consulting	9.5	Humanistic	8.1	Women
5.5	Developmental	8.1	Community	6.8	Consulting
		8.1	Rehabilitation	5.4	Hypnosis

#14 Industrial (n= 7)		#16 School (n= 15)		#23 Consumer (n= 1)	
28.6%	Consulting	13.3%	Clinical	* 100%	SPSSI
28.6	Military	13.3	Counseling		
*14.3	Adult Devel.	13.3	Developmental		
*14.3	Social	13.3	Retardation		
*14.3	Women	13.3	Women		
		* 6.7	Community		
		* 6.7	Consulting		
		* 6.7	Public Service		
		* 6.7	SPSSI		
		* 6.7	Therapy		

note: The number in parentheses is the total number of cosponsored sessions. Percentages represent the proportion of the division's cosponsored sessions held in conjunction with that other division. Where a division cosponsored fewer than 5% of the sessions it is not listed.

* represents only one session.